

for patent reform. We got that done too.

The President knows as well as we do we are happy to work with him whenever he is willing to work with us. If he turns his back on that good-faith offer, as we expect he will this year, we will remind people the problems we face are not about what Congress may or may not do in the future but what this President has already done—what has already happened.

Let the President turn his back on bipartisanship, let the press cover every futile speech and every staged event, but we intend to do our jobs. We invite him to join us.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4 p.m. today, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the first 30 minutes controlled by the majority leader or his designee and the second 30 minutes controlled by the Republican leader or his designee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

#### BIPARTISAN COOPERATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to the speech just given by the Republican leader of the Senate. He expresses a sentiment Americans share; that it is time for us to work together in the Senate and the House, across the board in Washington, and solve the problems which American families face every single day.

I agree with him completely. Unfortunately, the record does not reflect the level of cooperation which the American people are expecting. It was hardly a month or two into the Obama administration when the Republican leader announced that his highest priority was to make certain Barack Obama was a one-term President.

It is difficult to establish a working relationship when the first words out of a Republican leader's mouth are: We are going to defeat you. Then, as we addressed the largest issues of the day, time and again, we found little or no bipartisan cooperation. I think back to the important, historic debate on health care. If there was ever a moment when we should have come together with a bipartisan solution, it was that moment.

Despite the best efforts of Senator BAUCUS, the Democratic Finance chair and others, we were unable to even get

a core group of Republicans to join us in this conversation about containing the overwhelming increase in the cost of health care. At the end of the day, after one of the most painfully long and rancorous debates in Senate history, not one single Republican Senator would vote for health care reform—not one.

The same thing held true when it came to Wall Street reform. Many of us felt the recession we are currently coming out of was created by mismanagement and greed at the highest levels of our financial institutions. Many of us were angered by the fact that we were called on, with a political gun to our heads, and told, if we do not pass a bailout program for the biggest banks in America, our economy will crater and the weakest, poorest people in America will suffer the most.

That was our choice, our Faustian choice given at that moment. Many of us were determined to never let that happen again. So we put together a Wall Street reform bill. Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut, now retired, led the effort on the Democratic side, and we tried to come up with a bipartisan bill. We worked to do it. He was masterful in his day and did everything in his power to make it a bipartisan bill. Yet at the end of the day, not one single Republican would vote for Wall Street reform—not one.

Now, on the campaign trail, we hear from Republican candidates that they are going to repeal Wall Street reform. They are going to repeal health care reform. They are not creating an environment that is conducive to the level of cooperation of which Senator MCCONNELL earlier spoke.

I hope he is right; that even in this Presidential election year, we can find some common ground. There are several items which are immediately before us which require it: First, the extension of the payroll tax cut. This is a cut that helps working families across America and helps the economy. It will expire at the end of February if we do not reach a bipartisan agreement to extend it, along with unemployment benefits.

Secondly, postal reform. Many of the suggestions that have been made by the Postmaster General about saving money at the post office create real hardship in States such as Illinois, where some nine different mail processing facilities would be closed, closed in areas where I, frankly, could never justify it because they do a volume of work, do it well, and perform a valuable function. We have a chance. By May 15, the deadline which the Postmaster General agreed to in my office—by May 15, if we enact legislation signed by the President to save money and keep the post office running in the right direction, then we can avoid some of these onerous cuts and choices we have heard about.

But the burden falls on Congress, Democrats and Republicans, to achieve it. I hope we can.

#### CUBA AND HAITI

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, I had the opportunity to visit two island nations near our shores, Cuba and Haiti. Each is facing enormous problems—in Cuba, how to reform a Communist dictatorship of over half a century into a modern democratic member of the community of nations, and in Haiti how to rebuild from a devastating earthquake of 2 years ago in a nation already one of the poorest on Earth.

I concluded the trip more optimistic about Haiti, despite all its challenges, than Cuba, which quite simply appeared frozen in time in an ideology which should be cast aside for a more modern view of how to progress in the 21st century.

Let me start with Cuba. I am no fan of the Castro regime, but I am also no fan of the foreign policy of the United States. When I look back at what we tried to achieve for over 50 years in Cuba, any honest, objective analysis will have to tell you we did not achieve our goal. Fidel Castro is not a casualty of our own foreign policy; he is a casualty of old age. He is still there, and his brother now reins as his successor in Cuba.

Despite some notable achievement in this nation of Cuba, in areas such as health and education—and I saw firsthand as I traveled around some of these achievements—the government has maintained a grip on this island which is unfair to many of the people who live there.

Political opposition is swiftly and harshly repressed, often with severe prison sentences and deeply troubling harassment. Those pursuing greater political freedom of government accountability at times even find their young children threatened, as was sadly noted in the New York Times on Sunday.

In this most recent incident, Maritza Pelegrino Cabrales found herself repeatedly harassed by government officials for associating with the Ladies in White, a group of wives, mothers, and daughters, of political prisoners. Incredibly, state security officers threatened to take away her 5- and 7-year-old daughters.

Other brave Cubans, such as Oswaldo Paya, who collected thousands of signatures on a petition calling for modest political change, found himself and his colleagues harassed and in some cases jailed. Tragically, the petition process for change was actually called for in the Cuban Constitution. He was only following the Constitution of his country, and he ended up being harassed and many who supported him arrested.

Nonetheless, under President Raul Castro, there has been some modest reform, the conditional release of some political prisoners, and some economic reform. There has also been some serious oil exploration underway off the coast of Cuba. I wanted to go to Cuba for the first time to visit that part of